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THE

HUNTERIAN ORATION:

DELIVERED

IN THE THEATRE

OF THE

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

IN LONDON,

ON THE FOURTEENTH OF FEBRUARY,

1832,

BY

SAMUEL COOPER,

PROFESSOR OF SURGERY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, SURGEON
TO THE BLOOMSBURY DISPENSARY, ETC. ETC.

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TO
THE PRESIDENT,
COUNCIL, AND MEMBERS,
OF THE
ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS;
TO THE
MEDICAL PROFESSORS AND STUDENTS
OF THE
LONDON UNIVERSITY;
AND
TO ALL OTHER ADMIRERS
OF
THE GENIUS, TALENTS, AND CHARACTER
OF
JOHN HUNTER,
THESE PAGES
ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
BY ONE
WHO FEELS A PRIDE AND HAPPINESS
IN
BELONGING TO TWO GREAT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS,
IN WHICH THE
FINE PRINCIPLES,
THE GENUINE MERIT,
AND THE VALUABLE DISCOVERIES
OF A
HUNTER,
WILL EVER BE THE SUBJECT
OF
WARM AND SINCERE COMMENDATION.

*February 20, 1832,
Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury.*



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THE
HUNTERIAN ORATION,

FOR
1832.

MR, PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,

THE welcome day of the year has returned, when it is usual at this College to take up the pleasing theme of extraordinary genius,—wonderful industry,—and the greatest private integrity—all so combined in one man, the late John Hunter, as to have rendered him the glory of his profession, and an honour to his country. Ever since my commencement of the study of surgery, I have been accustomed frequently to contemplate the works of this distinguished individual, and never without instruction and delight;—never without a conviction of his superior and original mind, “a mind, whose power resided within itself, and

was not borrowed merely, or reflected from others." I have looked upon him as one of those rare specimens of human nature, which live not for themselves, but for the good of the whole world, and whose transcendent merits exalt them into a kind of legion of honour, quite distinct from the common race of mortals. With these feelings, Mr. President, how could I shrink from the duty that now devolves upon me, of reciting a few of his many claims to our grateful remembrance? How want a tongue to express the sentiments, with which I regard the value of his immortal labours? How refrain from admiring the private munificence, which decreed to him this annual commemoration?

Every civilized nation acknowledges the wisdom and expediency of celebrating the memory of great men, who have preeminently signalized themselves in arts, literature, or science. The custom is dictated by some of the best and most amiable feelings in our nature;—being perfectly congenial to every principle of good taste;—and, in various

points of view, a moral obligation. Be it remembered, that we are thus, not only discharging a debt of gratitude to meritorious and highly gifted individuals, whose lives have been a source of benefit to the whole community, but we are performing another not less agreeable, and perhaps a still more important duty—that of holding up for imitation some of the brightest examples of intellectual greatness, within the compass of all past ages. Can the love and veneration, with which the memory of the illustrious dead is saluted “in a nation’s eyes,” ever fail to excite in the living a noble spirit of emulation, powerfully conducive to the progress of truth and knowledge? Or can they fail to promote the repetition of all those fine actions and achievements, on which the praises of history, and the admiration of the world, will be to all eternity centred? They cannot fail: for, the assurance thus conveyed, that surpassing merit is the best road to fame and immortality, *must* rouse the capabilities of man, as certainly as the vernal sun calls into action the dormant

energies of the vegetable world. He is directly stimulated, as it were, by a solar warmth, and, like the plant, he may be said to grow. He immediately tastes and relishes the cup of knowledge; he is inspired by its virtues; he recollects, that he is of the same species—perhaps, of the same country,—with a Newton, a Bacon, a Shakespeare, a Milton, a Harvey, a Davy, or a Hunter:—the association is flattering to him; his diffident hopes are encouraged; and a generous ambition is at once kindled in his bosom.

Is there a mind so basely constituted, as to be totally indifferent to the fate of science? So dull, as not to be conscious of her beauty, if not of her power and usefulness? So regardless of reputation and honour, as not to wish to merit some small niche in the temple of fame, or to belong to that list of honoured names, which virtue and public spirit pronounce to be imperishable?

Such an insusceptibility of the attractions of knowledge, and so total a disregard of all its pleasures and rewards, it is impossible to

conceive; and though, on certain occasions, we find an approach to this nullity of intellectual existence, it is not that the seeds of improvement are entirely wanting, but only the stimulus, which should make them grow. Thus, as is well observed by a late professor of this College, the New Hollander, in his savage state, scarcely excels the beasts, his companions, and shows no tendency to better his condition, or to improve his faculties; yet, place him in communication with civilized man, and, though averse to leave his savage habits, he shows the original endowments of our nature, and vindicates, by his sympathies and his intelligence, his claims to be considered human.*

The admirable Shakespeare has predicted, that

“ the great globe itself,
Yea, all who it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like the insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind!”

* Mayo's Outlines of Phisiology, p. 267, Edit. 2.

If any part of this sweeping catastrophe be left unfulfilled, I am sure, that the exception will be in favour of the glory springing from great and virtuous actions, and the lustre that diffuses itself around genius and industry, successfully exerted to instruct and benefit mankind. Nor is my imagination so cheerless as to apprehend the consignment of these things to dark oblivion, even were there no mortal spared to express his admiration of them: assuredly, some other forms of intelligence would still exist to hold in just estimation all that had been great, wise, and beautiful in the annihilated creation.

The celebrated bard himself is, I think, not unlikely to prove the truth of this expectation; for, though his corporeal frame is dissolved, who shall say, that the fine effusions of his mind shall ever cease to be admired? Or, that taste and the love of nature shall ever die? The same thing may be anticipated, with respect to the great individual, whose brilliant services in the cause of science we are this day assembled to commemorate. John

Hunter is no longer a living member of our profession; he has quitted the stage, on which he acted a most distinguished part; but his deeds live after him; and his name must continue to be revered, as long as the power of discriminating splendid merit shall bid defiance to all revolutions. To use a figurative expression, I may say, that, until the infernal waters of Lethe become the common beverage of the universe, his works shall never be forgotten, but that, as the record of them devolves from generation to generation, they shall continue to receive new honours at every transmission. His Museum is certainly a monument more honourable to him, than the finest piece of marble, sculptured by the hand of a Canova or a Chantrey; and, when the perishable materials, of which it is composed, shall have wasted away, and seemingly left “not a rack behind,” the record of its contents, drawn up under the auspices of this College, shall still preserve to all posterity some reminiscence of his matchless labours, and transcendent discoveries.

MR. PRESIDENT.—If I were to be asked, who had been the greatest man, that had ever adorned the useful and noble profession, to which we are devoted, I should have no hesitation in fixing upon John Hunter as meriting this glorious distinction, and as having individually done more for the promotion of medical science, than any other person of ancient, or modern times. Hippocrates, Sydenham, Paré, and Wiseman, may have been as faithful in the observation of the lessons of experience, and in studying, what may be called the surface of nature in relation to disease; but the genius of John Hunter took sometimes a deeper, and sometimes a loftier range. Not satisfied with a mere notice of symptoms—of the circumstances influencing the chances of death or recovery—he asked himself *the reason* of all that presented itself to his observation, inquiring minutely into every process, which the animal economy reveals, both in health and in disease. With this view, he traced the structure and mechanism of the various organs of life throughout the whole range of nature,

beginning with those forms of vitality, which display the greatest simplicity of organization, and concluding with others, in the contrivances of whose structure complexity and perfection unite.

But if John Hunter were happy in the novelty and success of his physiological researches, he was quite as much so in the investigation of disease, his views of which were characterized by a degree of truth, boldness, and originality, certainly never surpassed, and possibly never equalled, in the labours of any other individual. Such, indeed, was the influence of the facts brought to light by his genius and industry, that the scientific parts of surgery were probably more improved by what he did, than by the discovery of the circulation itself.

Our countryman, William Harvey, immortalized himself principally by the dispersion of the dense mists of error and prejudice, which concealed from the penetration of other men the true course of the blood, and the respective uses of the heart, veins, and arteries.

By one blow, as it were, he annihilated a mass of ignorance, the continuance of which would have been an absolute prohibition to the origin of any thing like science, in the investigation of the vital functions, and of the perfect and imperfect conditions of the human body. William Harvey then most unquestionably deserves all the veneration, with which his name will ever be mentioned in the pages of history. I will say more—he is decidedly entitled to greater notice, than he has usually received; because some of his merit has been very much forgotten in the contemplation of that of the discovery of the circulation; and, while he has been amply praised for this, all the valuable and original matter, contained in his *Treatise on Generation*, has seldom obtained the degree of attention which it can justly claim.

But, if this illustrious man has the merit of having made, perhaps, the greatest of all discoveries affecting medical science, and, of course, the health and happiness of society, John Hunter is an object of not less celebrity

for the genius and success with which he explored all living nature, deducing from researches, unequalled in extent, difficulty, and originality, a multitude of important truths, directly influencing every branch of knowledge, to which the physician, the naturalist, the physiologist, and the surgeon, respectively direct their attention. Perhaps, as far as our branch of the profession is concerned, it might not be incorrect to say, that, with the exception of the discovery of the circulation, and that of the absorbent vessels, we owe to the genius and perseverance of John Hunter, almost every thing, that first gave to the doctrines and practice of surgery a scientific complexion.

MR. PRESIDENT,—The history of so active a labourer in the field of science, is not like that of the blank and trifling character, whose tombstone had nothing to record, but that he was born upon one day, and died upon another; two circumstances, which are common to all mankind. The life of John Hunter was very different from those of the men, finely de-

scribed in Holy Writ by the “path of an arrow,” which is immediately closed up and lost. His footsteps in the walk of science shall never be obliterated: the lamp, which his glorious hand first lighted up, and which yet serves to illuminate the medical philosophers of every country, shall never be extinguished.

It is delightful to trace every incident, however trivial in itself, that is connected with the history of a man of such preeminence. We are eager to glean some particulars of his family, native place, and youthful habits; of the manner, in which he spent his time; and of the way, in which he rendered himself at once an honour to his country and the age, in which he lived. As anatomists, as physiologists, and as surgeons, we must feel the same kind of curiosity, respecting John Hunter, as one* of the greatest mathematicians of Newton’s time felt towards this “Prince of Philosophers,” when he inquired, whether he ate, drank, and

* The Marquis de l’Hôpital.

slept, like other men? adding, “ I represent him to myself, as a celestial genius, entirely disengaged from matter.”

John Hunter was born on the 13th or 14th of February, in the year 1728, at Long Calderwood, a small estate belonging to his father, in the parish of Kilbride, a village in Lanarkshire, ten miles south-east from Glasgow. The spot is well known to the antiquary for the Roman remains, which have from time to time been dug up in its vicinity; but, in future, its principal claim to celebrity will be that of its having been the birth-place of a man, whose name, in the language of the almanac, ought to give the red letter to the day. No traveller, that has a spark of sentiment, or curiosity, within him, I presume, will ever pass near Kilbride, unmindful of its connexion with the birth of Hunter, or not desirous of visiting those identical fields, in which, “ when ev’ry sport cou’d please,” he loitered away the days of his youth. In truth, he seems to have been but an idle boy at the parish grammar school, to which he was sent, exhibiting no marks of

that superior genius, intelligence, and perseverance, which afterwards characterized every thing that he attempted. How disadvantageous his ignorance of languages, and of correct composition, was to him, when he became a writer, and wished to give an account of his own researches and opinions, must strike every scholar, that has occasion to refer to his publications. Yet, as his ideas were always clear, his facts strong, his reasoning most ingenious, and his views original, no writings on medical science possess greater attractions. A fascinating spirit of philosophy, and a rigorous devotion to truth, pervade all that he said, or wrote.

Here, Mr. President, allow me to observe how essential the latter noble resolution is to every successful votary of science. In the exploration of her treasures, the labourer must be guided by what he actually finds, and not by any favourite notions, to which he may have had a premature attachment; for science, amongst her numerous beauties, has none of a finer quality, than her implicit obedience to

the voice of truth: her nearest and noblest relative :

“ the parent this
Of Science, or the lofty pow’r herself,
Science herself, on whom the wants and cares
Of social life depend, the substitute
Of God’s own wisdom in this toilsome world,
The Providence of Man !”

It rarely happens, that the disadvantages, arising from the neglect of classical studies in our youth, can be removed by any subsequent diligence. If Horn Tooke and Dean Swift were exceptions, similar success cannot fall to the lot of those, whose daily occupations lead them into the busy scenes of life. With respect to John Hunter, his case may have been an instance of partial evil leading to universal good; and sober philosophy may even discern in this great man’s abstraction from the beauties of classic knowledge, one cause of his unrivalled success in the cultivation of those branches of science, to which the faculties of his mind seem to have been peculiarly adapted. Certainly, it is impossible to say, what might have happened, had he imbibed an early taste

for polite literature. Either he might have taken the same course in life, and communicated the same instruction to the world in finer language; or he might unfortunately have been allured into regions less calculated for the display of his genius; and the treasures, which he bequeathed, might never have been collected. At all events, the friends of science have reason to be satisfied with the decree of fate; and, though John Hunter's merit lay not, as Cæsar's did, in the sword and pen, he was well entitled to enjoy the favourite reflection, that, as we learn from Cicero, often consoled the Roman hero towards the close of his illustrious career; "*Se vixisse satis ad naturam et gloriam.*"

The circumstance, which first directed the thoughts of John Hunter to the medical profession, was the renown of his elder brother, William, as a teacher of anatomy. The inducement of studying under so distinguished a master, and so near a relation, made him quit Scotland in 1748, and he reached this metropolis for the first time in the month of Sep-

tember, at a period when he was nearly twenty-one years of age.

Dr. William Hunter was an eloquent lecturer,—a good scholar,—an indefatigable man of business,—pleasant in his address, and, at that time one of the first anatomists in Europe, ranking with cotemporaries of no less eminence than Monro, of Edinburgh, and Meckel, of Berlin. With such endowments, he soon attained professional reputation and independence. Whether John Hunter, without the assistance of such a brother, would have surmounted all impediments to his rise in the world, is a problem, which it is now impossible to solve. For my own part, with every due allowance for the power of his genius and industry, I incline to the belief, that, without the advantages procured for him by his brother's early patronage, he could not have succeeded in doing many of those things, for which his name is likely to be immortal.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—You know very well what Pliny says upon this topic: “*Neque cuique tam statim clarum in-*

genium est, ut possit emergere, nisi illi materia, occasio, fautor etiam, commendatorque contingat.”

It is true, that many works of genius and learning have been performed in states of life, that appear very little favourable to thought, or inquiry;—so many, that he who considers them is inclined to think, that “he sees enterprise and perseverance predominating over all external agency, and bidding help and hindrance vanish before them.” Thus, as Johnson has remarked, the genius of Shakespeare was not to be depressed by the weight of poverty, nor limited by the narrow conversation, to which men in want are inevitably condemned; the incumbrances of his fortune were shaken from his mind, as “dew drops from a lion’s mane.” But, it is to be remembered, that one vast difference exists between the case of the immortal bard, and that of John Hunter. The eye of the poet might

“glance from Heav’n to Earth,
From Earth to Heav’n,”

without his being called upon to pay a single fee; all nature was expanded to his view, and

what she communicated, he embellished with all the powers of one of the richest and finest imaginations ever created. But John Hunter, without his brother's patronage, might never have been able to reach those positions, from which alone it was possible to gain a commanding view of what he wished to explore. Hospitals, museums, dissecting rooms, and lectures, might probably have required a much heavier purse, than what he put into his pocket on mounting his horse to ride up to London from Long Calderwood. But, whether my conjectures be right, or not, the merit of Dr. William Hunter in befriending talents and genius, though called to do so by the voice of nature, is equally conspicuous, and deserving both of praise and imitation.

John Hunter began his professional career by devoting most of his time to dissection; and after having become proficient in human anatomy, he extended his researches to the structure of animals, convinced that, without the aid of comparative anatomy, the foundation of physiology must always be weak and insecure.

MR. PRESIDENT,—It is scarcely necessary for me to remind the assembly, which I am now addressing, that the fate of surgery is inseparably connected with that of anatomy: hence, in the dark ages, when the latter branch of knowledge was totally neglected, the former was in the lowest state of degradation. Empiricism usurped the place of science, and one circumstance was then exemplified, which presents a singular contrast to what is seen at the present day; namely, the rich and powerful were *compelled* to resign their purses and often their lives to ignorant pretenders, because no better assistance could be obtained; but now, when this disadvantage no longer exists, we find the noble and opulent *voluntarily* coming forward in Courts of Justice, as the patrons and dupes of murderous quackery, and, in opposition to all common sense and common decorum, spontaneously selecting the felonious charlatan, as the fit object of their protection and confidence.

When I join with such occurrences the present state of the laws of this kingdom, as having a decided tendency to promote the silent, but

extensive havoc of quackery, and to discourage the study of anatomy—the principal foundation of every thing that is good, safe, and useful in the practice, both of medicine and surgery—I can hardly bring myself to believe, that such things could have happened in a country, proudly exalted amongst nations by its love of science,—its attachment to truth,—and its contempt of mercenary ignorance. The laws, which give rise to circumstances, leading to the robbery of graves, and even to the murder of the living for the sale of their bodies, must be bad indeed; but the laws, which would totally interdict the study of anatomy, and leave the whole community a prey to those all-devouring monsters, Disease and Quackery, must be infinitely worse.

Thanks, however, to the usefulness of free discussion—thanks to the wisdom of some of our legislators—and thanks even to others, who have exposed their weaknesses upon this particular subject, (for, thus the cause has been materially served,)—the present discouraged state of anatomy promises soon to

cease ; and the sublime truth to be acknowledged, that reverence for the dead does not consist in withholding the scalpel from what, we know, can no longer be sensible of pain, or pleasure, but in perpetuating our love and admiration of whatever may have been amiable, great, and virtuous, in their transactions upon the stage of life.

Anatomy was entirely neglected by the Arabians ; nor was it till the beginning of the fourteenth century, that Mondini made public dissections in Italy. One circumstance, deserving of particular notice, as having had great influence in dispelling the vulgar prejudice formerly entertained in different parts of Europe against dissection, was the patronage, conferred upon several great painters, who flourished towards the close of the fifteenth century, and availed themselves of anatomical information for the perfection of their works. Michael Angelo, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, and Albert Durer, we know, were all either frequent dissectors, or draftsmen of dissected bodies. Here we may say, that the love of

painting obtained from princes and governments, in the fifteenth century, what the love of health and life—what common sense—ought to have procured, in the earliest ages of civilized society.

MR. PRESIDENT,—This is an occasion on which we meet, not to speak of John Hunter alone, but rather to consider him in association with other distinguished men, to whom medical science is deeply indebted. In our sincere and warm admiration of him, let us not entirely forget the useful labours of others, whose talents and exertions had vast influence in bringing anatomy and surgery to the degree of improvement, which these sciences had reached at the commencement of his splendid career. Amongst these meritorious characters stands first the memorable Vesalius, born at Brussels in the year 1514, and generally regarded as the founder of modern anatomy, whose labours in this department of knowledge were carried on with such rapidity and success, that, in the words of Senac, he discovered quite a new world before he was twenty-eight

years of age. At this epoch, few medical teachers dared to call in question the doctrines of Galen, and those who did, were considered guilty of something like sacrilege, and doomed to persecution and ruin. When Vesalius, therefore, presumed to consult the book of nature, and to prefer the dictates of reason and experience to the dogmatical tenets of Galen, his noble and independent spirit raised up a multitude of implacable foes, amongst whom were both Eustachius and Sylvius. The latter not only represented him to the world, as guilty of presumption and impiety, but as a madman, whose name should have been, not *Vesalius*, but *Vesanus*. In this instance, true merit was overpowered by bigotry and envy, and Vesalius, in order to escape the inquisition, was obliged to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, in returning from which he was shipwrecked upon the Island of Zante, where he died in extreme poverty.

But, though this illustrious man fell a victim to a most disgraceful persecution, and his labours were interrupted before he was thirty

years of age, his short career was not immediately closed up and lost, “like the path of an arrow,” but left vestiges of it behind, conspicuous in every part of anatomy.

Under the advantage of anatomical science, thus extended by Vesalius, and afterwards by his pupil Fallopius,* surgery assumed a very improved character in the hands of Fabricius ab Aquapendente and Ambroise Paré. Fabricius† was the favourite pupil of Fallopius, at whose death he succeeded to the anatomical chair at Padua. His talent as a physiologist stands high, a proof of which, as Baron Cuvier has pointed out, may be found in his observations on the production of the voice; a subject, in which he anticipated several things supposed to be of modern discovery. Thus, the formation of the voice in the glottis, and the effect of the elevation and depression of the larynx upon its tone, were facts perfectly

* Gabr. Fallopius, born at Modena in 1523, and died at the age of thirty-nine.

† Fabricius ab Aquapendente, born in 1537, and died in 1619.

and originally explained by Fabricius. But his principal fame arises from his merit as a surgeon, and hence Boerhaave, in comparing him with his contemporaries, speaks of him in the following terms: “*Superavit enim omnes chirurgos, et nemo illi hanc disputat gloriam.*”

As for Ambroise Paré,* his life forms an epoch in the annals of our profession; and the French assign to him the same rank in relation to surgery, which Hippocrates generally enjoys in respect to physic. This encomium can only be intended, however, to refer to his merit in the reform of ancient surgery, or, in other words, to the zeal and good sense, with which he promoted some of the valuable improvements, which followed the first due connexion of surgery with the correct anatomy established by Vesalius. To Ambroise Paré, the world is indebted for a just estimate of the superiority of the ligature, as a means of stopping hemorrhage; and, in particular, for a great number

* Ambroise Paré, born early in the sixteenth century, and died in 1590.

of important facts, relating to the treatment of gunshot wounds; as well as for a variety of other original suggestions, which the advanced period of the afternoon forbids me to enumerate. According to Riolan, the desire of transmitting his name to posterity was the noble incentive to every thing that he did; and, with reference to his professional labours, one of his favourite reflections was: “*Non omnis moriar, magnaue pars mei vitabit libitinam.*”

MR. PRESIDENT,—I next invite your attention to a name, which brings with it many claims to our esteem: Richard Wiseman, first known as a surgeon in the civil wars of Charles the First, was made prisoner in his service at the battle of Worcester, and after the restoration, appointed one of the serjeant-surgeons to King Charles the Second. He is justly regarded as the *Paré* of England; for he exercised his own judgment without restraint on whatever fell under his notice, and recorded with strict integrity, not merely his successful achievements, but all his mistakes and failures,

in the practice of his profession. Writers, combining the same candour and experience, as were exemplified in this honest, straight forward, Richard Wiseman, I should imagine, would do a great deal more for the improvement of modern surgery, than those who now blazon forth only their great and prosperous exploits.

Of William Harvey, who flourished in the beginning of the seventeenth century, I need say nothing, in addition to what has been already stated, concerning the vast influence, which his grand discovery of the circulation, had upon the progress of medical science.

The latter half of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century were signalized by the useful labours of Frederick Ruysch,* professor of anatomy and surgery, at Amsterdam; and generally renowned for having brought the art of filling the blood-vessels with coloured waxen injection to a high degree of perfection, by which means, he was

* Fred. Ruysch, born in 1638, and died in 1731.

enabled to make numerous and important discoveries in anatomy. As a matter of curiosity, we may notice his secret method of preserving the human body after death in so perfect a manner, that his skill, in this respect, was an object of peculiar admiration throughout Europe. We learn from M. Fontenelle, that the subjects, thus preserved, had no appearance of dryness and wrinkles; and that, with a florid complexion and supple limbs, they seemed as if restored to life, or merely asleep, and ready to speak as soon as awaked. Thus, while the mummies of Egypt only prolonged the mournful aspect of death, those of Ruysch may be said to have lengthened the agreeable picture of life.

The exertions of this great man were continually directed to improvements in practice, and, with this view, he was a strenuous advocate for maintaining the close and natural connexion of surgery with anatomy.* But, Mr.

* Ruysch published a Collection of One Hundred Cases, all of which are related in so admirable a manner, and are so full of instruction, that they have received the unqualified approbation of the best critics.

President, the time forbids me to prolong this description of the merits of Professor Ruysch, and I shall conclude my notice of him with observing, that he was not thought unworthy of the society of princes: Peter the Great, during his stay in Holland, dined several times at his house; and such was the estimation, in which the Professor's talents were held in foreign countries, that, when a vacancy had been occasioned in the French Academy of Science, by the death of our illustrious Newton, Ruysch was the meritorious individual selected to replace him as a member of that learned body, in the same way as the great Morgagni afterwards was to fill up the void, produced in it by the death of Ruysch himself, in 1731.

MR. PRESIDENT,—If the time had permitted, I should now have made some observations on the merits of Camper, Bertrandi, Cheselden, Samuel Sharp, and Baron Haller, not omitting a short notice of that constellation of shining members of the profession, who composed the Royal Academy of Surgery in France.

To this last institution the surgeons of every country will for ever look back with gratitude; yet, its warmest admirers must admit, that something was required for its perfection, which even the powerful monarch, who so nobly patronized and protected it, was not able to bestow:—need I say, that it wanted a John Hunter amongst its members, to exemplify how the dry facts of surgery might be studied in union with philosophy and science? And, whose genius would have communicated to its well written memoirs, a value more sterling even than that of their language, corrected, as it was, by the pens of a Quesnay, a Morand, and a Louis.

I may truly say, Mr. President, that we shall not find in the productions of that academy, nor in any other work extant at the period, when John Hunter began his matchless investigations, any tolerably good account of the nature of inflammation, that process in the animal body, with which almost every disease is more or less connected. Until his time, we shall in vain search authors for

any correct description of the theory of supuration and ulceration; or for any rational explanation of the manner in which the sanguiferous, the absorbent, and the nervous systems are respectively concerned in the phenomena of disease. His novel experiments and beautiful reasoning on the vital properties of the blood—his views of sympathy, as it exists between different parts of the animal body—his contrast of it with mental sympathy—his application of this doctrine to the elucidation of various obscure points in pathology—the novelty and truth of many of his conclusions respecting the nature of syphilis; and the ingenious considerations, which led to his improvement of the operation for aneurism—all furnish abundant proof of his original mind.

As in that fine portrait of his countenance, which made Lavater exclaim, when he saw it, “That man thinks for himself,” I behold in every thing that emanated from his labours a confirmation of the same sentiment. His mind, as Pope would have said, was not a simple multiplier of images, and not one of

those, which were derived from it, was like a mock rainbow, the reflection of a reflection.

If our profession, Mr. President, could furnish any modern names, which vie with that of John Hunter in originality and genius, they might perhaps be found in such men as Bichat and Abernethy. No doubt the very mention of the latter specimen of departed excellence, will make many who now hear me, feel something like the sentiment conveyed in the following line :

“ *Et redit ex tumulo vivificatus homo.*”

His genuine eccentricities — his fascinating manner of imparting knowledge to others — his acuteness of intellect — and his moral worth — will be immediately remembered and admired.

As a zealous cultivator of surgery, John Abernethy could not have been passed over in silence on an occasion like the present ; for not only did he strenuously exert himself for forty years in inculcating, in the most pleasing style, some of the most valuable doctrines of John Hunter ; but he was himself the source

of various improvements, which reflect credit upon his own genius. It was some time before the commencement of the present century, that I saw him tie the carotid artery, and it may be doubted, whether that operation had ever been fairly done, at an earlier period.* Very soon afterwards, I was present at two cases, in which he took up the external iliac artery for the cure of femoral aneurism; an operation, first planned by his mind, and first performed by his hand; an operation too, that now justly ranks as one of the boldest and greatest achievements in modern surgery. If further proof be required of his merits as a surgeon, it may be found in his Classification of Tumours, in his Views of the Injuries of the Brain, and Lumbar Abscesses; and in his Precepts relative to the frequent and close

* Here, the common carotid was cut down to, and tied, on account of hemorrhage from an extensive lacerated wound of the throat. It was Sir Astley Cooper who first took up the carotid artery for the cure of aneurism; a proceeding, that has already been the means of saving many lives.

connexion of apparently Local Disease, with Derangement of the Digestive Functions.

As for Richard Clement Headington, late Surgeon to the London Hospital, who also paid the debt of nature in the course of last year, and at a period too, when he was clothed with the highest dignity which this College can confer. I regard him as one, whose merit as a lecturer, as an examiner, as a practical surgeon—and as a character adorned with the nicest sense of honour, will fully apologize for my having mentioned his name in this Address, composed in praise of the greatest man that ever adorned the medical profession.

THE END.

